



Public Knowledge

Five Fundamentals for the Phone Network Transition

The Phone Network is Transitioning

- Our phone network is moving from traditional (TDM-based) technology to Internet Protocols (IP). This is inevitable because there is already a compelling business case for companies to update their networks.
- The transition presents opportunities for better services, but it must be handled responsibly.
- The FCC has a task force studying this issue to make policy recommendations.

Why Do We Need a Framework?

- A framework of fundamental principles will help us evaluate policy proposals throughout the transition, to ensure we continue protecting the values we care about most in our network.
- When natural disasters wipe out copper networks and carriers want to rebuild with fixed wireless or VoIP service, the Five Fundamentals can help ensure those new services still protect consumers.

The Five Fundamentals

- **Service to All Americans**
 - We cannot become the first industrialized nation to step back from the goal of providing access to communications service to 100% of our residents.
 - We must continue to ensure that all Americans, regardless of race, sex, income level, disability, or geographic distribution, can participate in our telecommunications networks.
- **Interconnection and Competition**
 - “Interconnection” is the requirement that any phone network attach to competing networks, so you can call anyone else on the network regardless of what phone company they use. This stops larger carriers from leveraging their customer base to edge out smaller competitors.
- **Consumer Protection**
 - Customers should continue to enjoy privacy in their phone calls and know that their phone bills will comply with truth-in-billing rules.
 - Consumer protection also needs mechanisms that give customers recourse if a rule is violated.
- **Network Reliability**
 - Above all, the phone network must work, every time, in the same predictable and reliable way.
 - When natural disasters strike, communications networks should be robust enough to withstand a storm, and damaged networks should be brought back online as soon as possible.
- **Public Safety**
 - We should make sure the new networks continue to provide dependable 911 access, and should take advantage of new technologies to increase 911 capabilities.

